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SIR FRANCIS DRAKE.

ENGLAND has long held the empire of the sea: this has been her distinguishing characteristic. In times of danger she has not trusted in her fortified cities or her martello towers, but in her wooden walls, which have been to her an invulnerable defence. War has desolated other lands,—fruitful fields have been turned into desert wastes,—labour has been driven from its daily toil,—happy homes have been blasted,—on vigorous youth and blushing maid—on smiling childhood and gray-haired old age—on sacred priest, and mother, more sacred still—has come down a common curse; but there in England

their insular position may account for this. Another, and a more potent reason is, that her sons have been brave and daring—full of a resolute courage no adversity could damp—of a lofty hope no disappointment could destroy.

In a humble cottage on the banks of the Tavy, not far from Tavistock, was born one of the men most eminent for the qualities we have named. In that neighbourhood, in the year 1546, lived a clergyman with a large family; and, as is often the case, with limited means. This clergyman was blessed with twelve children, of these the eldest became known to posterity



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they dwell secure—of all these terrors they have only known the name; for England's fleets and England's naval heroes have never failed her in her hour of need. Nor is this all. The British flag has proudly waved o'er every sea and floated on every wind; it has bound up nations by the bonds of commerce; it has carried the English Bible and English civilisation to every corner of the globe. Where the savage wandered it has planted flourishing communities, whose coming splendour bids fair to more than rival our own; it has been, in every corner of the globe, the banner of the free. In some degree,

as Francis Drake; the father was connected with Sir John Hawkins, the great naval commander: this would, possibly, account for the fact of young Drake's being destined for the sea. His father's removal to the neighbourhood of Chatham may also be taken as another reason for devoting the boy to that element on which he was afterward to win so fair a renown. But his beginning was humble enough: he was apprenticed to the master of a small trading ship; there he conducted himself so well, that his master dying, the ship and other matters equally acceptable were left to Drake. In this trade Drake

continued and became a money-making man; but this little traffic with the Dutch coast was not to occupy the whole of Drake's existence. Destiny had something greater and grander in store for him. We need not tell the reader how glorious was the reign of Queen Elizabeth—how society was stirred up from its very depths. That age was remarkable for an intellectual activity and a spirit of enterprise and speculation such as we should never have seen. It was the age of Shakspeare—of Bacon—and Raleigh—the powers of the human mind were concentrated on every conceivable subject; the loftiest intellects were spell-bound by the mysterious marvels of the illiterate and rude; men's lives and fortunes were frittered away in search of the philosopher's stone, that was to turn everything it touched into gold, and that was to preserve, to the age of Methuselah, the life of its fortunate possessor. It was an age that revered Dr. Dee as a philosopher, and that was shortly to credit everything Raleigh penned when he wrote his wondrous tale of nations of Amazons, whose heads were under their shoulders—of El Dorado and its mountains of glittering gold. Over everything a fervid imagination threw its gorgeous robe: at that time romance had her home, not merely at the Globe theatre, but in all broad England; from the Land's End to the Tweed, she had a local habitation and a name. The enterprise of England was allured by the flattering accounts brought home, by Sir John Hawkins, of the glory and treasure to be met with in the Spanish Main. Accordingly, Drake sold his ship and sailed out with his relative for that attractive spot. The adventure was unsuccessful: it redounded not to Drake's credit, for he somewhat basely deserted his companion, and lost his money besides. He gave proof, however, of his nautical skill, for he safely brought home the "Judith," a small vessel of fifty tons. In accordance with the morality of that age, Drake's next attempt was to compensate himself by a buccaneering expedition against the West Indies, in 1570. In 1572 we again find him in the Spanish Main, taking towns and receiving enormous ransoms. His next engagement was under the Earl of Essex, in Ireland: this led to his introduction at Court by Sir Christopher Hatton, and to the great voyage which won for him his fame as the circumnavigator of the globe. It seems from the Isthmus of Darien he had already looked on the South Sea, and had prayed that he might be the first to sail an English ship there. Drake went the right way to work to insure the prayer being answered, for he left no means untried for the realisation of his daring aim. The queen smiled upon his enterprise; and with vessels, the largest of which was but a hundred tons burden and the smallest ten, in December, 1577, he sailed from Plymouth for the South Sea. In the following June he arrived at the Straits of Magellan; thence he proceeded along the coast of Chili and Peru, coasted California and part of North America, of which he took possession under the name of New Albion; then he sailed across the Pacific ocean, and returned home by the Cape of Good Hope, having completed the circumnavigation of the globe in two years and ten months. This was his crowning glory. The Spanish ambassador complained, but the queen could not resist the popular impulse which had made the name of Drake dear to all his countrymen. She dined on board his ship, the "Golden Hind," and made the circumnavigator a knight. The ship was drawn on shore and sacredly preserved till it fell to pieces, when out of its planks a chair was made which was presented to the University of Oxford.

But now came rumours of war at home. In that age the greatest power in Europe was wielded by Spain. It was true of her, that the sun never set on her dominions. And Spain, with her great riches, with her daring sons, with her imperial powers, with the sanction of the Pope and the prayers of the faithful, prepared to wage war with England's queen. Our country needed stout hearts then: fortunately we had them. Drake was sent to destroy the fleet forming the Spanish Armada: he entered Cadiz, burnt 10,000 tons of shipping; he then burnt 100 ships and took three castles between Cadiz and St. Vincent (this he called "singeing the king of Spain's beard"); and then captured a Spanish carrack, laden with precious booty, which, however, was not all kept by Drake,

for part of it he appropriated to supplying Plymouth with water. When the Armada came, he was entrusted with the defence of the country, as vice-admiral, under Sir Thomas Howard of Effingham. His name was a word of terror to the Spaniards; they deemed it useless to fight against it. On account of it one ship, at least, surrendered without a blow. The next year, in an attempt to restore Don Antonio to the race of Portugal, he was not so successful.

In 1595, Drake and Hawkins, who had become friends again, sailed to win booty in the Spanish Main. It was a strong armament; they numbered twenty-six ships and 2,500 troops. But the battle is not always to the strong. Thus it was in this instance. The scheme failed: Hawkins died of vexation; Drake made subsequent attempts to restore success, but equally in vain. He, also, died of vexation; but he had a sailor's funeral and a nation's tears.

"Where Drake first found, there last he lost his name,
And for a tomb left nothing but his fame.
His body's buried under some great wave;
The sea, that was his glory, is his grave.
On whom an epitaph none can truly make,
For who can say, 'Here lies Sir Francis Drake?'"

Such was the tribute of the poetry of his age to the hero sleeping far away from his home and his fame. We give one more:—

"The waves became his winding-sheet, the waters were his tomb,
And for his fame the ocean sea was not sufficient room."

Drake is described as having been low of stature, with a broad open chest, brown hair, fair complexion, and clear large eyes. He was a married man, and served twice in parliament. In his own neighbourhood, and for many an after year, he was considered as a magician and in league with the devil. The popular mind could in no other way account for his unparalleled success. Fable after fable has been grafted on his marvellous career. According to the traditions of the western counties, in order to obtain fresh water with which to supply Plymouth, he mounted his horse, rode about Dartmoor till he came to a spring sufficiently copious for his design, then, wheeling round, pronounced some magical words, and galloped back into town, with the stream in full flow at his horse's heels. His success against the Armada was accounted for in an equally miraculous manner. According to one version, he raised his fleet by taking a piece of wood and cutting it in pieces over the side of his own vessel, when every chip, as it fell into the sea, immediately became a man-of-war.

Tried by the standard of our times, much of Drake's character must be condemned—but in his age divines sanctioned his expeditions. For a man always writing with great religious profession, we think Southey has taken a too favourable view of Drake's character. Of modern writers, Bancroft has taken the fairest view. "The lustre of Drake's name," he writes in his "History of America," "is borrowed from his success. In itself this part of his career was but a splendid piracy, against a nation with which his sovereign and his country professed to be at peace. Oxenham, a subordinate officer, who had ventured to imitate his master, was taken by the Spaniards and hanged; nor was his punishment either unexpected or censured in England as severe. The exploits of Drake, except so far as they nourished a love for maritime affairs, were injurious to commerce; the minds of the sailors were debauched by a passion for sudden acquisitions, and to receive regular wages seemed base and unmanly, when at the easy peril of life there was hope of boundless plunder. Commerce and colonisation rest on regular industry." But we must not be too severe. We must not judge the men of the past as if they were possessed of the light and knowledge of the present. We see in Drake a rude daring energy, which seemed wonderful in his own age. There was in him, not merely the greedy love of gain, but a desire to plant the British flag in seas and lands where before it had been unknown. The honour of his nation lured him on. Thus it was, he was buccaneer—discoverer—hero—precisely the character deemed great and noble—held up to admiration in the days in which he lived.